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INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDHP/DIA DHP-1 WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BASRAH 000013

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: FADHILA FOCUSED ON REGIONAL FORMATION; ELECTIONS ON
BACKBURNER

REF: A. A. BASRAH 002
[B. B.](#) BAGHDAD 221
[C. C.](#) BAGHDAD 333
[D. D.](#) BAGHDAD 450

CLASSIFIED BY: Howell H. Howard, Director, U.S. Regional Embassy
Office, Basrah, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C/Rel USA, MCFI) Provincial Councilor Aqeel Talib (Fadhila) told Regional Embassy Officer February 17 that the Fadhila party was more concerned with turning Basrah province into its own region than it was with future elections. Talib explained that the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) feared losing seats and hence influence in the southern provinces they hold as a result of upcoming elections. To preempt that from happening, ISCI is pushing for a nine-province region allowing it to create a regional assembly and consolidate its hold on the south before losing ground in provincial elections. If ISCI succeeded, southern Iraq would come under further Iranian influence, he said.

[1](#)2. (C/Rel USA, MCFI) Talib said that Fadhila's best chance to counter ISCI and Iran, as well as keep Basrah semi-independent from the "Iranian influences in the central government" would be to turn Basrah province into a single region (ref A). Because Iran could infiltrate a potential regional assembly through representatives from other provinces, Basrah had to form the region on its own. To succeed, Talib suggested delaying the May 14 deadline for passage of the Elections Law to give Fadhila and its allies more time to clarify the Regions Law before provincial councils could begin voting to form regions on April 1 (refs B-D).

[1](#)3. (C/Rel USA, MCFI) Talib also argued that the time between the passage of the Elections Law and the elections deadline of October 1 is insufficient to prepare for elections. Passing the Elections Law would be more contentious than anticipated, security needed to be solidified in some provinces before elections, the recently passed Justice and Accountability law needed time to take effect, and organizing international elections training and observers would take time. He suggested next year was more realistic.

[1](#)4. (C/Rel USA, MCFI) Comment: Fadhila's arguments to create a single-province region are partially disingenuous. Fadhila is probably truthful in its desire to counter any Iranian (hence ISCI in Fadhila's view) influence in the South. Fadhila is more likely concerned about maintaining control over Basrah.

Delaying the elections avoids the possibility of Fadhila losing power, which would be a major setback given Basrah is Fadhila's only stronghold. Turning the province into a region would allow Fadhila to solidify its already significant control over oil resources, tighten its grip on power, and insulate it from external influences. End Comment.

HHOWARD